

COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT REFORM
TOM DAVIS, CHAIRMAN



NEWS RELEASE

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Davis: FAA Acquisition System Still Not Cleared for Take-off

Washington, D.C. – Government Reform Committee Chairman Tom Davis (R-VA) issued the following statement upon today’s release of the Government Accountability Office report, “National Airspace System: FAA Has Made Progress but Continues to Face Challenges in Acquiring Major Air Traffic Control Systems” (GAO-05-331):

“More than twenty years ago, the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) began a modernization program to replace its National Airspace System (NAS) facilities and equipment, including the air traffic control (ATC) component, to meet air traffic safety, future capacity, and efficiency needs. Today’s report requested by the Government Reform Committee finds that while FAA has taken steps to address the challenges associated with the acquisition of ATC systems, FAA still has more to do before it’s cleared for take-off.

“GAO evaluated FAA’s experience in meeting cost, schedule, and performance targets for its major ATC systems acquisitions and found that one or more of the following factors contributed to the shortfalls: funding, requirements growth and/or unplanned work, stakeholder involvement, and software complexity. While GAO found that the Air Traffic Organization (ATO), the entity charged with managing ATC investments and operations, met its acquisition goals for 2004, those goals were based on updated milestones and cost targets. It’s impossible for Congress to judge progress if there are no consistent benchmarks.

“I’m pleased to hear that the ATO cut funding for certain underperforming systems and is reassessing its capital investments to ensure that priority systems receive the necessary funds to complete the modernization process. Unfortunately, FAA is likely to face greater challenges caused by constrained budget targets. For instance, FAA will receive \$2 billion less than it planned to spend through 2009. To accommodate the budget reduction, the ATO eliminated planned funding for new projects and reduced the planned funding in other areas to remain within budget targets.

“The Committee supports GAO’s recommendation that the Secretary of Transportation should direct FAA to provide Congress with information about the impact of the planned funding reductions on ATC modernization and other activities related to the NAS modernization program. Congress needs to know how ATC modernization efforts will proceed under funding reductions and whether this could adversely affect air traffic safety.

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